

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claims 21 and 22, without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein.

Please amend Claims 1, 2, 7, 9, 11, 19 and 20, to read as follows. A marked-up copy of Claims 1, 2, 7, 9, 11, 19 and 20, showing the changes made thereto, is attached. Note that all claims currently pending in this application, including those not presently being amended, have been reproduced below for the Examiner's convenience.

1. (Four Times Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism comprising:

a first holding member that holds a first optical element;

a second holding member that holds a second optical element;

a plurality of coupling members that couple said first holding member and said second holding member so as to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied during a coupling operation;

8 a plurality of urging members, respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, that urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least during the coupling

\ operation so as to permit alignment of respective optical axes of said first holding member
\\ and said second holding member during the coupling operation; and

a deformation restricting member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member that restricts deformation of said first

holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are varied during the coupling operation

2. (Twice Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, wherein each coupling member is a screw that couples said first holding member and said second holding member by press contact.

3. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 2, wherein each urging member is a deformable washer that generates an elastic force, and through which a shaft of said screw pierces.

6. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, wherein each urging member is disposed between a coupling member and said deformation restricting member.

7. (Twice Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 1, further comprising a friction preventing member, disposed between each coupling member and said second holding member, that prevents generation of a frictional force between said coupling member and said second holding member during the coupling operation.

8. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, wherein movement of said friction preventing member within a plane of varying

the relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member is restricted.

9. (Three Times Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, wherein said friction preventing member is said deformation restricting member.

10. (Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism according to claim 7, wherein each urging member is disposed between a coupling member and said friction preventing member.

11. (Four Times Amended) An optical apparatus comprising:
an apparatus body; and
an optical-element holding mechanism including:
a first holding member that holds a first optical element;
a second holding member that holds a second optical element;
a plurality of coupling members that couple said first holding member and said second holding member so as to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied during a coupling operation;
a plurality of urging members, respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, that urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least during the

- \V coupling operation so as to permit alignment of respective optical axes of said first holding
\\ member and said second holding member during the coupling operation; and

a deformation restricting member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member that restricts deformation of said first holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are varied during the coupling operation.

19. (Twice Amended) An optical-element holding mechanism comprising:

- a first holding member that holds a first optical element;
- a second holding member that holds a second optical element;
- S a plurality of coupling members that couple said first holding member and said second holding member so as to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied during a coupling operation;
- a plurality of urging members, respectively disposed between each of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, that urge and press said second holding member against said first holding member at least during the coupling operation so as to permit alignment of respective optical axes of said first holding member
- \V and said second holding member during the coupling operation; and
- a deformation restricting member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member that restricts deformation of said first holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are varied during the coupling operation;

wherein said deformation restricting member includes a plurality of first through hole portions for receiving said plurality of coupling members;

wherein said first holding member includes an extended portion extending in the direction of the optical axis of said first optical element, said extended portion including a plurality of abutting faces and a plurality of receiving portions for receiving the plurality of coupling members; and

wherein said second holding member includes a plurality of flanges extending in a direction perpendicular to the optical axis, each flange abutting against one of said plurality of abutting faces of said first holding member, each flange including a second through hole portion for receiving a respective one of said plurality of coupling members.

20. (Twice Amended) An optical apparatus comprising:
 - an apparatus body; and
 - an optical-element holding mechanism including:
 - a first holding member that holds a first optical element;
 - a second holding member that holds a second optical element;
 - a plurality of coupling members that couple said first holding member and said second holding member so as to permit relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member to be varied during a coupling operation;
 - a plurality of urging members, respectively disposed between each
 - of said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member, that urge and press
 - said second holding member against said first holding member at least during the coupling

- 1 operation so as to permit alignment of respective optical axes of said first holding member
- 2 and said second holding member during the coupling operation; and
 - a deformation restricting member disposed between said plurality of coupling members and said second holding member that restricts deformation of said first holding member while relative positions of said first holding member and said second holding member are varied during the coupling operation;
 - wherein said deformation restricting member includes a plurality of first through hole portions for receiving said plurality of coupling members;
 - wherein said first holding member includes an extended portion extending in the direction of the optical axis of said first optical element, said extended portion including a plurality of abutting faces and a plurality of receiving portions for receiving the plurality of coupling members; and
 - wherein said second holding member includes a plurality of flanges extending in a direction perpendicular to the optical axis, each flange abutting against one of said plurality of abutting faces of said first holding member, each flange including a second through hole portion for receiving a respective one of said plurality of coupling members.

REMARKS

The claims now pending in the application are Claims 1 to 3, 6 to 11, 19 and 20, the independent claims being Claims 1, 11, 19 and 20. Claims 1, 2, 7 9, 11, 19 and 20 have been amended. Claims 21 and 22 have been cancelled.